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SUBJECT: NIGER: ECOWAS Mediator Submits New Proposal

REF: A) NIAMEY 00109, B) NIAMEY 0048, C) NIAMEY 0029, D) NIAMEY 0025

¶1. (SBU) On February 10, in a formal document, ECOWAS Mediator for Niger General (retired) and former Nigerian head of state Abdulsalami Abubakar presented a new proposal for a way out of Niger's political crisis. The proposal is based on position papers previously submitted by the People's Movement for the Restoration of the Republic (MPRR - Government) and the Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic (CFDR - Opposition) in the ongoing Inter-Nigerien Political Dialogue (INDP).

¶2. (SBU) General Abubakar's new proposal for a political transition is composed of 17 articles entitled "Inter-Nigerien Political Dialogue: Draft Agreement for a Political Transition in Niger." The ECOWAS Mediator proposal calls for a transition led by a "National Reconciliation Government" made up of seven bodies as follows: 1) President Tandja remaining President; 2) a Prime Minister to be selected by the Opposition and approved by the INDP and a Cabinet composed of representatives of the President's supporters, the Opposition, civil society, labor unions, women's groups, and youth to be approved by consensus; 3) the National Assembly be extended to 160 members from its current 113, with the Opposition comprising the added members; 4) a new Constitutional Court created by consensus; 5) a new Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) created by consensus; 6) a new High Council on Communication (CSC) created by consensus; and 7) a new National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP) created by consensus. In addition, a Constitutional Conference would be created by consensus to draft a new constitution through a consultative process.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: It is clear that General Abubakar is trying to keep the ball rolling in this lengthy process. The new proposal provides for power-sharing in the executive between the President and the Prime Minister. The GON, however, considers this an affront it cannot accept. The Opposition, however, agrees with the Mediator's proposal, but questions how the proposal to extend the National Assembly would be implemented. (Note: If the opposition were to participate in the current National Assembly, it would be tantamount to recognition of the August 4 illegal referendum and 6th Republic. End note.) Although General Abubakar has yet to set a date for the resumption of the INDP, it is likely that it will continue sometime after the conclusion of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government Summit slated for February 16-20 in Abuja. End comment.
WHITAKER